

Notice of Meeting

Extraordinary Meeting Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

Tuesday, 30 September, 2014 at 6.30pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices Market
Street Newbury

Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday, 24 September 2014

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact David Lowe / Charlene Myers / Elaine Walker on (01635) 519817 / 519695 / 5194

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Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk



**Agenda - Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission to be held on Tuesday, 30
September 2014 (continued)**

To: Councillors Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman),
Sheila Ellison, Dave Goff, Roger Hunneman, Mike Johnston,
Alan Macro, Garth Simpson, Virginia von Celsing, Quentin Webb,
Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

Substitutes: Councillors Peter Argyle, Paul Bryant, George Chandler, Gwen Mason,
Tim Metcalfe, David Rendel, Julian Swift-Hook and Keith Woodhams

Agenda

Part I

Page No.

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any),
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any Personal, Disclosable Pecuniary or other interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' [Code of Conduct](#).
- 3. Formalise recommendations.** 1 - 54
Purpose: To set out to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission draft recommendations identified during the review into the severe weather events of the winter of 2013/14.

Andy Day
Head of Strategic Support

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact
Moira Fraser on telephone (01635) 519045.



West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

Agenda Item 3.

Title of Report:	Severe weather, winter 2013/14
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	30 September 2014

Purpose of Report: To set out to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission draft recommendations identified during the review into the severe weather events of the winter of 2013/14.

Recommended Action: It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission agrees the recommendations that should go forward for consideration by the Executive and other organisations.

Key background documentation: Winter Floods & Storms 2013/2014 Debrief Report

Resource Management Select Committee Chairman	
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Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) has carried out a review into the severe weather events experienced in West Berkshire over the winter of 2013/14.
- 1.2 This report sets out the Terms of Reference and methodology of the review and proposes a number of draft recommendations for agreement by the Commission.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1 The Commission agreed that a review would be undertaken into the effects of and response to the severe weather that affected West Berkshire during the winter of 2013/2014, in order to ensure that the appropriate lessons are learnt and measures put in place to mitigate the effect of future severe weather events. In particular the review sought to
- (1) Understand what happened and why
 - (2) Determine whether the plans in place prior to the flooding were effective
 - (3) Identify the lessons that should be learnt
 - (4) Assess the future severe weather risks to the District and the extent to which they might be managed
 - (5) Report to the Executive and others with recommendations as appropriate.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 The review was undertaken by the full Commission over the course of a series of public meetings. In outline, the meetings were structured as set out in the table below.

Date	Times	Meeting focus
1 September 2014	1100 – 1645	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Events overview• Council response
5 September 2014	0900 – 1630	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Response by other agencies
11 September 2014	1330 – 1745	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effect on and response by communities
30 September 2014	1830 – 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sign off of recommendations

- 3.2 The recommendations identified by the Commission will be included as part of a wider and composite debrief report, a working draft of which was provided to the Commission at its meeting of 1 September 2014, for consideration by the Executive in due course.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission agrees the recommendations that should go forward for consideration by the Executive and other organisations.

Appendices

Appendix A	Draft recommendations
Appendix B	Minutes from 1 st September 2014
Appendix C	Minutes from 5 th September 2014
Appendix D	Minutes from 11 th September 2014

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Appendix A - SEVERE WEATHER SCRUTINY

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Item (a)	Recommendation (b)	Justification (c)
	Communication, information, advice and guidance	
01	<p>The Head of Strategic Support should develop and implement a flood communication strategy to ensure that the right information is delivered to the right people at the right time. It should include elements to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of information to residents and businesses on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Their roles in protecting their own premises before flooding occurs and examples of permanent and temporary measures that the public can take to protect their property ○ The roles and responsibilities of flood risk agencies and the help and advice they can expect from agencies during incidents ○ The causes of flooding and level of flood risk ○ The responsibilities of riparian owners ○ Flood incident health and safety ○ The Council’s culvert policy ○ The limitations of sandbags as a flood defence measure) ○ Health and safety risks associated with surface water, river and sewer flooding. • The communications channels (e.g. emails, face to face, websites, ‘flood bus’, text, social and broadcast media etc) to be used during flooding incidents and how they might be exploited to best effect • The triggers and activation processes for the establishment of communications cells within the Emergency Operations Centre. 	<p>As is common with most emergency incidents, dissatisfaction with communication and transfer of information was the mostly frequently raised aspect of the response.</p> <p>The development of a communications strategy should increase the awareness of the importance of proper, adequate and timely communication with all agencies.</p>

Item (a)	Recommendation (b)	Justification (c)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How best to work with other agencies to develop triggers and activation processes for the establishment of communications cells within the multi-agency Tactical Co-ordination Centre • The joining-up of agencies' telephony and internet channels to provide a single point of contact for residents that gives the information and they need, regardless of provider. The joining-up of agencies' telephony and internet channels to provide a single point of contact for residents that gives the information and they need, regardless of provider. 	
02	The Civil Contingencies Manager should seek advice from the DCLG on the insurance implications for car owners breaking road closures (damage to vehicle, recovery from vehicle, recovery of vehicle, damage to households). When obtained, this information should be communicated to residents.	There have been a number of avoidable incidents caused by vehicles being driven through road closures. The loss of insurance cover for this type of incident could provide an incentive to drivers that will benefit the agencies responding to emergency incidents.
03	The Environment Agency should take steps to increase the number of West Berkshire residents signed up to its flood alert system.	The numbers of survey respondents advising that they have signed up to the EA's alert system has dropped. There is a benefit to having more subscribers to this service.
04	The Environment Agency, working with the Council's Civil Contingencies Manager, should develop and deliver a package of training (including through the use of videos) for all agencies and for the public on how, when and where to build effective sandbag defences.	Sandbag filling and barrier building is an identified training gap. Videos for the public may provide education on the utility of sandbags and therefore reduce expectations.
05	The Civil Contingencies Manager should specify, select, procure and deliver a management system for the Council's Emergency Operations Centre that allows for effective and efficient logging, tracking and dissemination of information relating to emergency incidents.	The current system of incident tracking relies on the use of a spreadsheet. When dealing with large numbers of incidents the system is unwieldy and creates a risk of necessary and appropriate responses not being provided.

Item (a)	Recommendation (b)	Justification (c)
06	The Executive Member for Emergency Planning should ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to consider the establishment of a single point of contact for the public when reporting all types of flooding (like those services provided by 101 or 111) from where calls can then be directed to the appropriate agency.	Residents have no clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each of the agencies involved in providing responses to flooding and calls are consequently frequently mis-directed. A system such as that proposed would eliminate the requirement for residents to have any prior knowledge when reporting flooding.
07	The Head of Highways and Transport should explore the opportunities for the use of appropriate technologies, such as mobile phone applications or satellite navigation systems, for the dissemination of real-time road closure alerts. A report on the available options should be returned to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission by June 2015.	Prior knowledge of road closures should allow motorists to select alternative routes, thereby assisting traffic movement and reducing the risk of their requiring assistance or causing avoidable damage through, for example, the creation of bow waves.
08	The Civil Contingencies Manager should ensure that communities are regularly updated on the progress of ongoing flood prevention and alleviation work being undertaken by all agencies in their areas.	Communities do not believe that they are being kept informed of the action being taken in their areas. This builds frustration and an apprehension for future incidents.
Resources and logistics		
09	<p>The Head of Highways and Transport should establish a register of recently retired or other local highways engineers willing to work with and for the Council during extended flood events. Assessment of their suitability to be included, or remain, on the register should be carried out.</p> <p>The Civil Contingencies Manager should closely monitor the effectiveness of the scheme and if, appropriate, consider its extension to other emergency incident competencies.</p>	The capacity of the Highways engineers was severely tested last winter. This action may assist in providing resilience.
10	Parish Councils in known flood-risk areas should purchase pumps and other emergency flood alleviation equipment for use in their own communities. Progress should be measured and monitored.	The ability of communities to help themselves will greatly assist agencies with response responsibilities over wider geographical areas. It

Item (a)	Recommendation (b)	Justification (c)
		will also provide assurance to local communities that resources will be available for their own immediate concerns.
11	Through the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum, the Civil Contingencies Manager should seek the establishment of a Strategic Resilience Resource Store at an appropriate location or locations to hold essential flood alleviation equipment, including personal protective equipment. This should be supported by plans for its ongoing maintenance and resourcing, as well as activation, staffing and de-activation during and after incidents.	Not all the necessary equipment has been available to agencies when or where they have needed it. Pre-placement of essential equipment will allow for a more rapid response.
12	The Civil Contingencies Manager should establish and maintain a register of local providers able to provide assets that might be mobilised in the event of an emergency. The required items might include large goods and 4 x 4 vehicles (including those with snorkels), pumps and personal protective equipment.	Organisations outside of statutory responders have access to resources that may at times be essential but not available to the responding agencies. Prior knowledge of what is available and where it is will allow for a more rapid response.
13	The Head of Highways and Transport should create an adequate stock of 'road closure', 'flood' and 'foul water' signs for deployment during flood incidents.	Insufficient signs were available to be deployed to every location at which they were needed.
Planning and organisation		
14	The Civil Contingencies Manager should revise the West Berkshire Vulnerable People Plan to incorporate a process for sharing and collation of information from and between agencies.	Lists of vulnerable people are held by a number of agencies, none of which provide a match with any other. Access to all data will ensure that the welfare of all known vulnerable people can be maintained.
15	Through the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum, the Civil Contingencies Manager should seek the provision of the training necessary to ensure that key Category 1 decision-makers have the confidence to declare a 'major incident' or to request mutual aid when and if necessary.	Escalation of incidents allows for the provision of help and support when it is needed. Reluctance to do so can provide for limited responses and stretched resources.

Item (a)	Recommendation (b)	Justification (c)
16	Through the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum, the Civil Contingencies Manager should reinforce that the necessity to activate Business Continuity Plans when dealing with major incidents, particularly when they are of a prolonged duration, is fully understood by senior managers within Category 1 organisations. This should include the requirement to provide representation to Tactical Co-ordination Groups.	Business Continuity Plans allow organisations to balance their response to incidents with their 'business as usual' activities in ways that are both planned and structured. This is especially important for the allocation of manpower to deal incidents.
17	The Civil Contingencies Manager should work with all agencies to ensure that their roles in recovery, as well as response, are fully understood and delivered against.	Some responders were left with a disproportionate burden in dismantling, recovering and striking down the structures, equipment and organisations put in place to deal with incidents.
18	The Civil Contingencies Manager should obtain clarification from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the responsibility for the provision of portaloos during events that involve sewage water flooding.	Uncertainty exists as to the responsibility for the provision of portaloos.
19	The Head of Education should work to achieve 100% adoption of Major Incident Plans within schools.	Not all schools have Major Incident Plans in place. Pre-planning will allow for a more rapid response to incidents.
20	The Civil Contingencies Manager should develop and appropriately resource a plan for the activation of a Tactical Co-ordination Group in the Council offices.	The location of the Tactical Co-ordination Group in the Council offices was very successful. Pre-planning for this eventuality, should it be either necessary or desirable, will allow for a more rapid activation in future.
21	The Head of Highways and Transport, working with the Civil Contingencies Manager, should develop and maintain a local critical infrastructure map.	There is no single, definitive map of key infrastructure locations. An authoritative map will allow vulnerable locations to be identified and protected.
22	The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service should develop and deliver a multi-agency water and flood safety training programme.	There is limited knowledge of flood safety amongst other agencies and training will reduce

Item (a)	Recommendation (b)	Justification (c)
		the risk to their staff.
23	<p>The Head of Highways and Transport should develop the local flood plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect risk and identify where strategic flood protection and response assets might be located. • Identify private land on to which flood water might be diverted to protect homes or businesses from damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will aid planning and the setting of priorities for future work. • There is currently no definitive list and the creation of such will allow for a more rapid response in future.
24	The Civil Contingencies Manager should conduct annually an audit of flooding readiness prior to the onset of winter.	The conduct of a readiness audit will inform decision making, identify gaps in readiness and should provide public reassurance.
25	The Environment Agency should work with land owners and other agencies to develop a plan for the management of locks and weirs in the event of flooding incidents.	No plans are currently in place and the utility of locks and weirs to mitigate fluvial flooding was not exploited.
26	The Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum should consider the inclusion of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) as participants in the Tactical Co-ordination Group when necessary.	RSLs, particularly Sovereign, made a valuable contribution to the response to the severe weather and their resources should be appropriately directed.
27	The Civil Contingencies Manager should consider the inclusion of Registered Social Landlords as participants in the Emergency Operations Centre when necessary.	RSLs, particularly Sovereign, made a valuable contribution to the response to the severe weather and their resources should be appropriately directed.
28	The Head of Strategic Support should incorporate the consideration of emergency planning into the parish planning process, particularly for those communities whose areas are likely to benefit from the establishment of a local flood forum.	Local flood forums are not established in all locations that have known flood risks. The parish planning process provides a mechanism for the establishment of these bodies.
29	The Environment Agency should review its dredging policy to ensure that it is fit for all purposes and that dredging is carried in all locations where there would be benefit. A report setting out the findings should be returned to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission by	There is concern, echoed nationally, that waterways are not being appropriately managed and that dredging is not being used as widely as it could be.

Item (a)	Recommendation (b)	Justification (c)
	June 2015..	
	Community support	
30	The Civil Contingencies Manager should work to establish a Major Incident Support Team (MIST), comprising individuals available to be deployed to affected communities.	Face to face communication is extremely effective and provides a significant degree of reassurance.
31	The Civil Contingencies Manager and the Environment Agency should integrate and co-ordinate the work of their respective flood wardens and flood ambassadors to ensure they achieve the best effect.	Wardens and Ambassadors have similar roles but their use and utility was not fully harnessed.
	Operations	
32	Thames Water, working with Network Rail, should expedite the work to address the flooding of Newbury railway station.	Flooding at the station affects a significant number of people each day and has, as a single incident, a disproportionate effect on residents.
33	The Head of Highways and Transport should examine the possibility of Council or other staff assisting police officers in the enforcement of road closures.	Thames Valley Police had insufficient staff to man all road closures.
34	If preventative measures cannot be applied to known flood prone roads (in order to keep them open) then the Head of Highways and Transport should assess the feasibility of providing permanent gates or barriers, including on fords. A report setting out the findings should be returned to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission by June 2015.	The erection or construction of permanent barriers will alleviate the requirement to man temporary road closures. It should also have the effect of reducing the need to respond to drivers who have become stranded when attempting to negotiate flooded roads.
35	Thames Water should ensure that the waste water network is protected from ground and surface water ingress.	The foul water flooding was caused by ground and surface water entering the Thames Water network, which exceeded its designed capacity.
36	All RSLs should consider the requirement for property level protection in their housing stocks. A report on the feasibility of works should be returned to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission by June 2015.	As major landlords in the district, RSLs have the potential to reduce the flood risk to a significant number of properties.
37	The Head of Highways and Transport should consider providing the Neighbourhood Wardens with the keys to manhole covers for use during	The Wardens reported that the temporary opening of manhole covers would have allowed

Item (a)	Recommendation (b)	Justification (c)
	flooding incidents.	surface water to drain much more quickly when gullies were unable to clear volumes of water for which they were not designed.
39	The Civil Contingencies Manager should investigate the utility of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in the response to flooding and other emergency incidents. A report setting out the findings should be returned to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission by June 2015.	The images of flooded areas provided by police and military overflights greatly aided situational awareness and resultant planning. The use of a locally controlled UAV would reduce the reliance on much sought after – and expensive – assets that are under the control and direction of other agencies.
40	The Head of Highways and Transport should develop and deliver a scheme of works to fit non-return valves on highway sewers that drain into rivers.	This would address reports of swollen rivers back-flooding highways through gullies designed and intended to drain the other way.
	Other	
41	The Leader of the Council should commission a strategic review of the implications of climate change on the Council and other agencies. The scope of the review should be sufficiently wide to evaluate the impact of climate change on business as usual activities as well as preparedness for severe weather incidents.	The increasing frequency of severe weather events indicates that climate change is something of which the Council and its partners should be aware and for which they should be appropriately positioned.

Appendix B

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2014

Councillors Present: Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Paul Bryant (Substitute) (In place of Dave Goff), Sheila Ellison, Roger Hunneman, Alan Macro, Garth Simpson, Virginia von Celsing and Quentin Webb

Also Present: Sean Anderson (Head of Customer Services), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support), Mark Edwards (Head of Highways and Transport), June Graves (Head of Care Commissioning, Housing & Safeguarding), Mark Lewis (Education Assets Manager), Carolyn Richardson (Civil Contingencies Manager) and Jon Winstanley (Projects Manager - Highways & Transport), David Lowe (Scrutiny & Partnerships Manager) and Charlene Myers (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Dave Goff, Councillor Mike Johnston, Councillor Emma Webster and Councillor Laszlo Zverko

PART I

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

2. **Severe winter weather 2013/2014**

Councillor Brian Bedwell thanked Members for attending the meeting and encouraged any Members present during the course of the review to participate in the meeting on 15th September 2014 in order to incorporate the collective views of the Commission.

David Lowe introduced the item to the Commission and highlighted the meeting format which had been outlined in the cover report, the order and timing allocated for speakers had been amended in order to accommodate Members' commitments to existing meetings.

Appendix A, Winter Floods and Storms 2013/2014, was presented to the Commission as a draft report. The Commission was advised that the scrutiny review would contribute towards the final draft and formation of recommendations which would subsequently be issued to the Executive for consideration.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked when the timetable of meetings had been agreed, he could not recall being consulted. David Lowe advised that the scoping document was presented at the meeting on 1 July 2014 and subsequently agreed.

In response to questions asked, Andy Day advised that if a recommendation had national implications then the Executive would be asked to submit the details of the recommendation to Central Government in writing. It was agreed that national recognition would encourage agencies' accountability.

Civil Contingencies

Carolyn Richardson was invited to summarise the effects and response to recent severe weather by providing a presentation which outlined the following;

- Emergency planning legislation
- Roles and responsibilities & preplanning
- What happened during recent severe weather
- The impact in West Berkshire
- The response provided
- The recovery process
- The lessons learnt so far.

Carolyn Richardson proceeded to explain that the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 defined the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and its responsibilities and powers. Carolyn Richardson advised that West Berkshire Council was defined as the LLFA and the core function sat within the Highways and Transport Service. The LLFA was responsible for the development, maintenance, application and monitoring of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) and was required to consult the public and local risk management authorities on its LFRMS.

It was the responsibility of the LLFA to establish and maintain a register of structures or features which, in the opinion of the authority, were likely to have a significant effect on a flood risk in its area and set up a committee to oversee the flood risk management functions of the local authority's area.

The FWMA imposed duties on LLFAs to Investigate flooding incidents, (referred to as Section 19) and co-operate with other Risk Management Authorities (RMA).

The LLFAs had the powers to:

- Consent works on ordinary watercourses (watercourses not overseen by the Environment Agency)
- Designate 3rd party assets that affected flood risk and give notice to owners that the assets had been adopted
- Request information from Risk Management Authorities
- Carry out works relating to groundwater and surface water flooding
- Approve / reject Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS).

Carolyn Richardson provided Members with a slide to illustrate the roles and responsibilities of agencies and the general public (specifically riparian owners) as defined within the FWMA and detailed locally within the LFRMS.

The Commission heard that the Emergency Planning function was underpinned by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). The legislation defined the scale of incidents as the following:

1. Emergency: an event or situation which presented a serious threat to:

- Human welfare
- The environment

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- Political, administrative or economic stability
 - The security of a place
2. Major incident: an emergency that required the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, the NHS or the local authority to address:
- Large numbers of casualties
 - Large numbers of people involved
 - Large volumes of enquiries
 - the requirement for large scale resources.

Carolyn Richardson explained that an Emergency was more commonly experienced due to the scale of impact. A Major Incident usually prompted the need for extensive resources as was experienced on 7th February 2014 when West Berkshire declared a Major Incident.

The Commission heard that, as detailed within the CCA, it was the responsibility of the Local Authority to:

- Undertake risk assessments;
- Develop Emergency Plans;
- Develop Business Continuity Plans;
- Arrange to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- Share information with other local responders to enable greater co-ordination;
- Co-operate with other local responders to enhance greater co-ordination and efficiency; and
- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management.

Specifically the Council was required to:

- Support the Emergency Services
- Co-ordinate voluntary support
- Manage evacuees and survivors
- Provide an emergency mortuary
- Co-ordinate the recovery phase
- Maintain essential services

Carolyn Richardson explained that the CCA defined two groups of responders who had different degrees of responsibility and duty. Category One responders were subject to the full set of duties as detailed within the CCA, these were:

- Police
- Fire & Rescue Service
- Ambulance Service
- Local Authorities
- Environment Agency

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- Hospital Trusts
- NHS England

Category two responders were referred to as 'co-operating bodies'. They were less likely to be involved in the heart of planning work, but would be heavily involved in incidents that affected their own sector. Category 2 responders had a lesser set of duties which were broadly around co-operating and sharing relevant information with other Category 1 and 2 responders. Category 2 responders were:

- Utilities
- Communications companies
- HSE
- Highways Agency
- Ports and airports
- Clinical Commissioning Groups

Councillor Bedwell asked whether the declaration of a Major Incident by one agency was supported by the other responders. Carolyn Richardson advised that the declaration would be supported and resources offered irrespective of which agency declared a major incident. If the incident was slow building then it was often the case that agencies participated in teleconferences over a period of time, therefore, the pressures and challenges faced by responders would be known and the need for additional resources pre-empted. Carolyn Richardson advised that agencies were fully supportive of the decision made by the Council to declare a Major Incident on 7th February 2014.

Carolyn Richardson stated that the Military was not defined as a responder within the CCA and therefore was not subject to the same duties. In response to questions asked, Carolyn Richardson advised that the Military assistance arrived in West Berkshire on Saturday 8th February 2014. Carolyn Richardson advised that their arrival was swift due to the strong working relationship in place with the Joint Regional Liaison Officer (Lieutenant Colonel PCE Mileham RA).

Responding agencies had specific responsibilities both in the preplanning stages and during the course of a response. These were:

Police

- Scene coordination
- Cordon control
- Investigations
- Oversee the casualty bureau

Fire & Rescue Service

- Fire & Rescue and water rescue
- Mass decontamination
- Urban Search & Rescue
- Pumping
- Fire Safety

Environment Agency

- Managed flood alerts
- Management of main rivers

To enhance resilience and understanding amongst responders it was vital that agencies worked together. The Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF) used the National Risk Register to develop a Community Risk Register, through which they could identify the need to develop, train and exercise plans by establishing subject matter task and finish groups. The Berkshire Resilience Forum provided agencies with the opportunity to meet twice yearly to enhance working relationships.

Carolyn Richardson provided a slide to illustrate the various plans in place to address identified risks. Plans were developed at various levels, Thames Valley, Berkshire and West Berkshire; the need for each was determined by the assessed level of risk and local relevance. The full suite of plans would not necessarily be relevant in the case of severe weather but it was recognised that an effect of flooding could lead to another plan being activated, such as the Evacuation Plan if residents could not return to their homes. West Berkshire plans were underpinned by the Major Incident Plan.

In moving to discuss the specifics of the 2013/2014 severe weather, Carolyn Richardson advised that the incident escalated significantly when the River Thames levels increased dramatically. In the build up key agencies participated in daily teleconferences in order to prepare resources and share vital information. Due to strain on Council resources caused by a series of storms, unprecedented volumes of rainfall and increasing river levels, West Berkshire Council declared a Major Incident on 7th February 2014. The Council then established and operated a full Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) 24/7 for 2 weeks. Full command and control arrangements were established in the Thames Valley, a Tactical Coordinating Centre (TCG) was located within the Council building and a Strategic Coordinating Centre (SCG) established at Kidlington. As the level of the required response decreased the SCG formally ceased on 21st February 2014, at which point the Council coordinated the Recovery phase. Carolyn Richardson advised that the incident 'ended' in June 2014 at which point the last flood alert was removed by the EA, however, the recovery effort continued and in some cases was still underway.

Page 34 and 35 of the agenda provided statistics to illustrate the extent of ground water levels and the volume through the course of the year. It would normally be expected that ground water levels decreased through the summer and autumn months allowing sufficient capacity within the aquifers to store average levels of rainfall during wetter months. Carolyn Richardson explained that the impact of severe weather in West Berkshire was evident in the unusually high groundwater levels through 2013 and early 2014.

The combination of high winds and an unprecedented volume of rainfall over a prolonged period significantly impacted the local area, most noticeably through 14th - 17th February by when the EA had issued 3 Fluvial Flood Warnings, 7 Fluvial Flood Alerts and 2 Groundwater Alerts. All rivers and all sections of the rivers were affected to the extent that the risk of flooding to properties was evident. Carolyn Richardson stated that the period was extremely challenging in terms of managing resources and establishing priorities.

Members were advised that the impact of the weather was evident across the district, in particular at the Scottish and Southern Electricity Grid Site at Burghfield as the site was threatened by flood water, resources were committed to ensure the site remained operational. Andy Day explained that reports on the situation were escalated to Central Government (Cabinet Office Briefing Room A – COBRA), due to the risk that thousands of local residents could lose power if the site flooded.

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Some communities were isolated as access through key roads became restricted due to flooding and subsequently closed to ensure drivers' safety. Similarly, the Newbury Station and Junction 13 of the M4(A34) experienced serious flooding which restricted travel.

Some communities experienced significant problems with waste water disposal. Water infiltrating the network resulted in sewage surcharging into properties and out from manhole covers onto roads and gardens. In some cases people lost the use of their basic facilities within their homes as the network became overwhelmed.

High winds led to a large number of trees falling, minor structural damage and numerous power outages.

Carolyn Richardson stated that it was impossible to quantify the emotional impact that the recent weather had on affected communities. The Commission heard that the debrief surveys issued to residents, Parish Councils, Flood Wardens and businesses provided statistical evidence on the impact but could not highlight the psychological effect. Councillor Sheila Ellison advised that following the 2007 floods in Thatcham a series of public meetings took place, which were considered by many to be therapeutic as they provided an opportunity to speak to agencies direct.

Carolyn Richardson advised that in response to the issues identified, the Council had deployed individual pumps to vulnerable homes and with the help of the EA and RBFRS located larger pumps in strategic locations. Sandbag walls were put in place to reduce flooding from large sites and portaloos were deployed to communities who had lost the use of facilities within their homes,

There was some difficulty ensuring the resources were effective, as demonstrated with the number of road closures lifted by drivers. The RBFRS conducted numerous rescues from flood water as drivers drove through road closures which had been established to minimise the risk of drivers becoming stranded and to stop bow waves flooding nearby homes.

Andy Day suggested that Parish Councils could purchase pumps in advance as they were vital in some cases to avoid flooding but difficult to obtain due to the level of demand. The Commission discussed the use of a central storage location so that Parish Councils might access resources rather than individually purchase items.

Carolyn Richardson advised that through the work of Stuart Clark (Principal Engineer) the Council planned to review areas which flooded through the completion of the Section 19 reports. They would consider strategic locations for pumps and sandbags as it was intended that by doing so there would be less demand on resources and their effectiveness could be maximised.

Councillor Ellison suggested that historical information would aid agency understanding of flooding in certain areas and referred specifically to Newbury train station. Carolyn Richardson thanked Councillor Ellison for the suggestion and advised that historical information was often reviewed as each flood incident was different.

Carolyn Richardson advised that the EOC was supported by Liaison Officers who would monitor the situation directly within communities and then feedback to the EOC and TCG.

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Councillor Alan Macro highlighted that the report suggested staff felt facilities within the EOC were inadequate. Carolyn Richardson advised that the functionality of the EOC developed through the course of the response, in the early stages the multi agency representatives sat within the EOC which caused a lot of noise and disruption. Through the establishment of the TCG the disruption was minimised. Carolyn Richardson advised that the technological facilities used within the EOC were adequate, although the Information Management system required a review to improve efficiency.

Andy Day advised that 176 people across the Council assisted in the EOC and that due to the scale of the incident it was necessary to ask all staff to assist, irrespective of previous training. The majority of staff said they had enjoyed helping and would help again if required. It was stated that assistance was also received from the Emergency Planning Officers in the Royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Reading Councils.

Councillor Quentin Webb referred to a comment within the agenda which suggested that the EOC failed to adequately communicate with the Customer Contact Centre. Carolyn Richardson acknowledged that there had been some challenges with sharing information, in part due to the necessity of using inexperienced staff within the EOC the variations in style during handover.

In explaining the relationship between the EOC and TCG, which had been situation in Committee room 1 and 2 at Market Street, Carolyn Richardson stated that the TCG coordinated the multi-agency response and linked to the SCG and EOC, which in turn coordinated the Council's Response. The location of the TCG was effective, reinforced by the positive feedback received from agencies.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked whether the new RBFRS station at Theale could be considered as an alternative EOC/TCG location and in response Carolyn Richardson advised that discussions were underway to explore the feasibility of using the building.

Carolyn Richardson advised that the TCG was pivotal in coordinating the allocation of military aid within the district. It was noted that the military aid provided sufficient resources to ensure sandbags could be deployed in a timely manner.

Councillor Paul Bryant asked whether sandbags were an effective method of flood prevention. Carolyn Richardson stated that the national guidance regarding flood prevention measure rated that sandbags were less effective than other Property Level Protection measures.

In response to questions asked about the allocation of sandbags, Carolyn Richardson advised that the SCG established one of two Strategic Sandbag Cells for the Thames Valley area at the Chieveley Depot. With the support of army, navy and RAF the depot was used as the base to receive, fill and distribute sandbags. There was a number of sandbags unused which was later recycled. Due to the demand for sandbags and scale of the event, the Council was required to request bags via the SCG before they could be removed from the sandbag cell. Carolyn Richardson advised that the concept was developed as the incident developed and in response to the national level of demand for sandbags. The concept of a Resource Centre would be an item of interest to the TVLRF going forward.

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The Commission heard that through the debrief process, it became apparent that some communities were unaware of their responsibility to protect their own homes. Carolyn Richardson referred to statements contained within the residents' survey which suggested that the majority of respondents felt it was the responsibility of the Council to remediate. Carolyn Richardson stated that rural communities were more likely to work together and collectively problem solve than urban communities. Similarly, communities who had experienced flooding in the past were more likely to hold an emergency plan and therefore more likely to be prepared to respond.

Central Government had introduced various financial schemes to assist with the process of recovery and longer term flood prevention for affected residents and business. Carolyn Richardson advised that the Repair and Renewal Grant offered up to £5000 towards PLP measures if a property had internally flooded between December 2013 and March 2014. To date the Council had received 46 applications, of which 12 had been paid and 5 rejected. Applicants were encouraged to consider a joint application if a flood prevention scheme could benefit multiple properties, Carolyn Richardson advised that one scheme was underway in Streatley with the support of Stuart Clark.

The Commission thanked Carolyn Richardson for her presentation. Councillor Bedwell asked the Members to consider the recommendations contained within Carolyn Richardson's report and identify where the Commission might offer additional support.

Customer Services

Sean Anderson summarised the performance of the Customer Contact Centre and his experience as Controller in the EOC.

The Customer Contact Team consisted of experienced staff who provided prompt and informative responses to incoming calls. The team worked in close proximity to the EOC which strengthened communication and existing working relationships with Council Officers. These were pivotal in escalating actions and requesting updates.

Prior to the full activation of the EOC the Civil Contingency team established a mini EOC in the Customer Contact Centre which strengthened communication immediately. The team were experienced in such events and therefore knowledgeable about the local geography and how to manage incoming calls effectively. The team performed well and provided an essential function in the management of the flow of information.

Sean Anderson stated that he had been an EOC controller on numerous occasions during various incidents managed by the Council. Sean Anderson advised that whilst working in the EOC he had experienced a variation of handover styles and information cascade which impacted on the efficiency of the EOC at times. Often this was relative to the experience of the staff in the EOC. If a broader range of staff received training then inconsistencies would be addressed.

Sean Anderson concluded by stating that he felt the performance of the EOC was very good overall.

Councillor Roger Hunneman asked why the Contact Centre closed at 19:00 each day as he presumed there was a demand by residents to contact the Council irrespective of time of day. Sean Anderson advised that the contact lines remained open past 19:00 but filtered to the out of hours contact centre. Residents contacted the Council predominantly

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in the morning and demand decreased in the evening. If the out of hour's service received a call which required urgent attention then they contacted the EOC direct with details of the call.

In response to questions asked, Sean Anderson provided the following information

- It was not necessary, in his opinion, for roles within the EOC to be aligned to Officer grades. The roles required certain personal attributes and it would be advantageous if the staffing of the EOC considered suitability rather than grade alone.
- Customer Centre staff received EOC training through involvement with recent Emergency planning exercises.
- The Customer Centre prioritised tasks during the incident to ensure all Council services remained operational. Managing capacity within the service was challenging but managed efficiently.
- Customer Centre staff had sufficient equipment and resources to complete their assigned tasks.
- The Customer Centre used a telephony system to filter calls according to their nature which enabled prioritisation of tasks and allocating resources within the service.
- Callers could request a call back to avoid long waiting times.
- The customer service experience was managed very well during the incident, interaction with the EOC was managed through a logging system.
- The Customer Centre experienced difficulties remaining abreast of recent information and advice as decided by the EOC or TCG. Communication could have been improved if a structure of briefings was in place.
- Staff worked endlessly to support the response, whilst there was no initial concerns with regards to the Working Time Directive, after two weeks it was apparent that staff found it challenging to maintain the same level of support.

Councillor Bedwell thanked Sean Anderson for his contribution towards the review and for his service's response to the severe weather.

Children's Services

Mark Evans advised the Commission that he would represent both Children's and Adults' Services. He proceeded to summarise the effects of the recent weather and performance of the Children's and Adult Services teams.

The Commission heard that the services were mainly affected by the demand on resources in order to support the EOC whilst maintaining critical services, e.g safeguarding. Overall the direct impact to service delivery and the vulnerable people receiving those services was minimal.

Using existing systems the EOC was able to access information to highlight vulnerable people known to the Council. The information enabled resources to be allocated and prioritised accordingly and, where necessary, for staff to proactively manage demand for special arrangements.

Councillor Bedwell asked how the service managed the notification of an elderly resident who may have been unable to leave their home as a result of the weather. Mark Evans advised that it was mostly the case that neighbours conducted regular checks and assisted with the provision of food and necessities. The Commission heard that it was difficult to know how many individuals required such support, especially if they were not

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known to the Council before the incident. Mark Evans explained that they supported any case where the Council was asked for assistance and the service regularly checked vulnerable people known to the Council.

Carolyn Richardson advised that the EOC had access to RAISE which contained information from Children's and Adult services. The team was therefore able to instantly check whether vulnerable people lived within affected areas. It was intended that in such circumstances agencies could create a composite list of vulnerable people within communities, however, consideration would be required to ensure information was managed correctly.

Carolyn Richardson advised that the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum had a Vulnerable People Plan which detailed the multi agency approach to preplanning and responses required when assisting vulnerable people. It was suggested that a specific version could be created for West Berkshire.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, Mark Evans provided the following information

- Neither service had sufficient resources available to provide additional psychological support which might transpire as a result of the recent severe weather.
- Discussions were underway to create a Major Incident Support Team (MIST) within the Council. The team would focus on providing psychological support in the earlier stages of an incident. The Public Health Team coordinated the communication to schools and local GPs, which detailed the symptoms to look for and services available to support individuals.

Councillor Jeff Brooks thanked Mark Evans for his contribution and expressed his view that an Officer from Adult Services was required in order to fully understand the extent of the issue specifically in that service. Councillor Brooks wanted to know how many individuals in receipt of care packages had not been visited due to the conditions limiting travel to their home. He asked to know the attendance levels by carers during the course of the severe weather.

The Commission agreed that Adult Services would be re-invited in order that Members could discuss the service performance in more detail.

Councillor Brooks asked for more information on the Flood Bus which was introduced during the course of the severe weather. Carolyn Richardson advised that in response to demand for face to face communication between resident and agencies, the TCG instructed the coordination of two information buses. The buses, with representatives from responsible agencies on board to answer questions and hand out leaflets, visited affected communities. The information bus was created in reaction to demand and developed over the course of two visits, the method of communication was generally well received and an option to consider in the response to future incidents.

Councillor Brooks suggested that similar communications would have been beneficial for Members to receive. He suggested that if sufficient guidance was provided then Members could cascade the advice face to face within their communities. Carolyn Richardson acknowledged Councillor Brooks' suggestion and advised that Members were issued daily updates by email, however, it was possible that additional means of updates might add value.

Education - Schools

Mark Lewis summarised the effects of the recent weather and performance of schools in West Berkshire, rather than the impact on the Education Service.

The impact on schools overall had been minimal. The Commission heard that one school experienced a power surge due to the storms in December 2013. The storms highlighted a number of structural weaknesses within numerous schools, however, these were minor and did not require the schools to close. Surface water threatened schools but fortunately there were no reports of internal flooding. Mark Lewis advised that road closures or flooded roads caused issues with access to schools.

The Commission heard that the majority of schools had plans and processes in place to assist them in situations such as those experienced between December 2013 – March 2014. These included the Critical Incident Plan, Critical Incident Process and Severe Winter Weather Guidance, all of which were supported by the Critical Incident Team in West Berkshire Council.

Mark Lewis stated that following the 2007 floods and further heavy rainfall in 2008, schools sites that experienced flooding issues were assessed and a scheme of works developed where necessary and/or surface water drainage works undertaken. In particular, Aldermaston Primary School implemented Property Level Flood Protection measures and subsequently had not experienced flooding during recent severe weather.

Councillor Bedwell asked whether staff had experienced difficulty travelling to schools and therefore whether there were any cases of school closures due to a shortage of staff. Mark Lewis advised that the Critical Incident Team maintained regular communications with schools and there had been no cases that they had been made aware of.

Councillor Roger Hunneman made reference to comments within the report which suggested that the Critical Incident Team experienced difficulties communicating with the EOC. Mark Lewis explained that the information they required related to road closures which directly impacted access to schools. Information regarding duration and extent of the road closure was sometimes delayed or unknown. Mark Lewis acknowledged that the information was not always available to the EOC which caused some frustrations.

The response provided by the service consisted of the Critical Incident Team and regular communications with schools to support their decision making. Schools were reminded to refer to the plans and guidance in place. Mark Lewis advised that Officers visited numerous schools in order to make direct assessments where more targeted assistance was required.

The impact on service delivery was minimised by the use of the Critical Incident Team and having robust plans and processes in place, both of which were crucially supported by the experience of Officers and their willingness to work outside core working hours in order to maintain business as usual tasks.

There were limited recovery actions required due to the relatively low impact on schools, although a review of the plans and processes would be undertaken.

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Councillor Webb asked whether every school had an Emergency Plan in place, Mark Lewis stated that the service requested a copy of each school's Emergency Plan and as yet they had yet to receive one for every school.

Highways and Transport

Mark Edwards and Jon Winstanly summarised the impact of recent weather experienced by the Highways and Transport teams.

Mark Edwards began by explaining that the response was challenging to the service and had been resource intensive. Engineers had been critical during all stages of the response investigating issues, reassuring communities and problem solving with innovative engineering solutions.

The service received 300 calls from the public in December, 900 in January and 1100 in February. Mark Edwards explained that the numbers were reflective of the deteriorating situation.

During the course of the incident, engineers committed themselves fully to supporting the response, so much so that some Officer's were stood down in order to ensure their welfare.

Mark Edwards advised that neighbouring Local Authorities had been asked to place staff on standby, however, their assistance was not called upon. If the incident had continued past two weeks then additional resources would have been requested.

The two main areas of focus within the service were the flooding of properties and the deterioration of roads.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, Jon Winstanly and Mark Edwards advised the following:

- It was the responsibility of the Council to replace manhole covers if they posed a risk to the highway, irrespective of who owned the drain.
- Some residents lifted Thames Water manhole covers to allow surface water to drain into the network. In some cases the additional water in the system created significant issues elsewhere in the network, which in turn impacted communities and homes. It would be beneficial if communities were provided the information to better understand the impacts of such actions in order to minimise the effects.
- The highways drainage system was designed to cope with only rainfall landing on the highway. Between December to March the drainage systems were inundated with additional water draining from fields and rivers. The system was overwhelmed with water and therefore could not drain water away.
- It was not practicable to expect the highways drainage system to be redesigned to take excess volumes of water.
- As part of the Flood and Water Risk Management plan the service was in the process of creating and maintaining a register of flood risk assets. The list would include assets owned by the Council and third parties. The assets were fundamental elements of flood risk management and therefore required regular inspections and maintenance.
- The Asset Management Plan outlined the management of the highway network and was not to be confused with the Asset management register which listed flood assets only.

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- Part of the Flood and Water Risk Management Act stated that planning applications must include plans for drainage. The F&WRMA was currently under review. Part of the proposed changes to the F&WRMA was that the Lead Local Flood Authority would be required to manage the drainage of any planning application where the development included more than two properties. The changes had not yet been introduced.
- The flooding experienced at Newbury train station was a direct result of a blockage in the Thames Water network which surcharged and infiltrated the highways network. Both Thames Water and Network Rail were continuing to investigate the issue and complete remedial work. The Council would also work with both agencies to ensure that the matter was resolved promptly.
- The Council used its existing contractors to manage resource demands, Volker's assisted with the deployment of sandbags as instructed by the Council.
- The Council continued in its efforts to establish the identity of owners of ditches and where possible serve notices to owners if they required clearing.

Councillor Brooks raised the issues experienced by residents in Lower Way, Thatcham. He explained that the road was closed due to significant sewage flooding, which presented a risk to public health, however, residents were inconvenienced by the closure which restricted access to their homes. A lack of communication with residents compounded the problem.

The Commission discussed the process for notifying communities about road closures and how Councillors could be an integral part of the communication cascade. Jon Winstanly advised that under the process for planned road closures communities would be informed in advance, unfortunately due to the nature of the response and immediacy required, the Council was unable to communicate the closure in advance.

The Commission discussed the risks and challenges presented by drivers contravening road closures which had been put in place for public safety. The following points were raised throughout the discussion:

- The Highways and Transport should have signs prepared in advance to warn drivers and residents of the risks associated with the road closure and which may help them to understand why it is in place.
- Once a road closure was in place it was considered a formal road closure and therefore illegal to pass through. Some road closures were enforced by the police to ensure public safety was not compromised. Demand on resources, however, meant this was not possible in all cases.
- Information could be issued to the Parish Councils ahead of an incident advising them of the risks associated with driving through flood water and road closures. The information could be cascaded to residents through local newsletters.

Councillor Webb asked Officers to expand on the point within the report which suggested that communications within the EOC were challenging. Carolyn Richardson suggested that the comment was raised in reference to the initial stages of the EOC set up at which point multiagency representatives were positioned in the same room. The noise levels interfered with productivity and concentration. Carolyn Richardson stated that the issue resolved itself when the TCG was established.

Councillor Bedwell asked Jon Winstanly to explain the purpose of a Section 19 report. Jon Winstanly explained that under the F&WRMA the LLFA was required to conduct investigations into the causes of property flooding and issue recommendations for future

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prevention. Following the most recent floods, investigations had taken place across 20 Parishes and the draft reports had been issued to Parish Councils for their comments ahead of publication in September 2014.

In response to the level of demand placed on engineers during recent months it was discussed that the provision of support specialist advice was crucial. Councillor Brooks suggested that the team requested the assistance of neighbouring authorities if possible and also considered asking retired engineers for their assistance.

Mark Edwards advised that the service had completed phase one of a recovery programme along the highways network. Stage two included the repairs to a further 10-12 roads which would then conclude all works of the winter recovery programme. The planned works were in addition to normal business and road maintenance works.

Councillor Bedwell thanked Mark Edwards and Jon Winstanly for their contribution and commitment during the recent severe weather.

Recovery Working Group (RWG)

June Graves summarised the impact of the severe weather on the Communities Directorate overall and advised that she would then explain the activities of the Recovery Working Group.

The Communities Directorate had played a significant role during recent events, providing key members of staff to the EOC and on standby to staff Rest Centres. The Housing team had been prepared for the eventuality of residents requiring urgent housing.

June Graves highlighted that there was a vast amount of experience within the Communities team derived from their involvement in previous incidents. Their experience ensured that key services remained operational and also contributed substantially towards the Council response.

In response to questions asked June graves advised that the list of vulnerable clients was readily available within the EOC. Welfare staff had access to RAISE which enabled instantaneous decision making.

June Graves described the progress of the Recovery Working Group. The Commission heard that the group had formed during the course of the response and as the immediate effects of severe weather in communities began to decrease. The RWG was created in accordance with the TV LRF recovery plan and was assisted by an Emergency Planning Officer from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (as detailed within the Berkshire Memorandum of Understanding).

The structure of the group had been developed to ensure in detail to ensure maximum efficiency and provided integrated working within the Council. Once established the RWG was supported by subgroups which reflected of the demands and priorities for recovery. These were:

- Communication
- Public Health and Wellbeing
- Environment and infrastructure

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- Finance
- Resources

The RWG received support from the Heads of Service and had achieved full attendance from those Officers required.

The wider recovery structure consisted of a Berkshire RWG and TV LRF RWG. June Graves advised that the Berkshire RWG was chaired by the CEO at RBWM and held weekly meetings/teleconferences to ensure consistency across Local Authorities on the health advice provided to communities, the process for removal of sandbags and administration of various grants.

Over time the need to conduct weekly Berkshire RWG meetings had diminished as Local Authorities recovered at different stages. June Graves advised that West Berkshire and RBWM had been required to continue their respective recovery efforts due to the extent of the effects they had experienced. Over time the necessity to refer issues to the Berkshire RWG had ceased.

The West Berkshire RWG was an effective mechanism to co-ordinate the Council's recovery effort. The group used an action log to keep track of items inherited or established through the course of the response phase, as well as to monitor newly identified recovery needs.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, June Graves provided the following information:

- There had been no cases of Gastroenteritis recorded by GP's as a result of the severe weather.
- Information to highlight the symptoms of longer term psychosocial effects was provided to GPs, schools and displayed on the Council website.
- The RWG invited Thames Water to meetings in order that actions could be tracked and progress closely monitored.
- June Graves visited Newport Road which had been highlighted as an area which required urgent attention in the process of recovery. Speaking to the residents had helped June Graves to understand the needs of the community and therefore consider remedial action.
- Coordinating the recovery in West Berkshire was challenging due to the wide area impacted and the number of rural communities which required attention.
- The total cost of the response has not yet been agreed. A submission had been raised and issued to DEFRA for their consideration.
- West Berkshire Council had been provided funding from Central Government to conduct complete recovery efforts in areas such as Public Rights of Way.
- The Council was required to submit details of financial commitments and monies released fortnightly. The reporting requirement would continue until March 2015.
- Sandbag recovery advice issued by the EA and Public Health England was contradictory which impacted on the ability of the Council to give advice to the public.
- The handover from the SCG to the RWG had been earlier than preferred as agencies locally were in the process of recovery. By definition, the SCG was no longer required to coordinate the response, however, West Berkshire continued to provide sandbags and portaloos beyond the SCG ceasing operation. It had been challenging to coordinate the response and recovery simultaneously, therefore the assistance of an EPO from RBWM was requested to support the earlier stages of recovery.

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Councillor Bedwell thanked June Graves for her participation in the review and commitment during the Council’s phases of response and recovery.

In response to final remarks made by the Commission, Carolyn Richardson advised the following:

- The analysis of survey data had taken a large amount of time but it was a crucial element of the debrief process which enabled the Council to better understand the impacts and lessons to be learnt to aid future planning and response.
- It was difficult to quantify the data in terms of the impacts across the entire district due to the number of responses. As, for instance, only 8 businesses had completed the survey.
- The feedback suggested that, in the main, the Council had managed the response well.
- It was evident that some communities understood the level of responsibility required to ensure their properties were suitably protected from risks such as flooding. It was acknowledged that a significant amount of work would be required to inform all residents and communities that they had a fundamental role in ensuring their property was protected.

Councillor Bedwell thanked all Members and speaker their contribution.

(The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and closed at 4.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

Appendix C

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2014

Councillors Present: Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Sheila Ellison, Roger Hunneman, Alan Macro, Garth Simpson, Virginia von Celsing and Quentin Webb

Also Present: , Matt Anderson (Scottish and Southern Electric Power Distribution), Sarah Burchard (Thames Water), Matthew Hensby (Sovereign Housing Association), Katherine Dolman (Environment Agency), Lindsey Finch (Thames Valley Police), Sabine Furlong (Thames Valley Police), Nick Gessey (Sovereign Housing Association), Simon Hall, Matthew Hensby (Sovereign Housing Association), Maria Herlihy (Environment Agency), Alex Howison (Scottish and Southern Electric Power Distribution), Paul Jacques (Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service), David Lowe (Scrutiny & Partnerships Manager), Lieutenant Colonel PCE Mileham RA, Hilary Murgatroyd (Thames Water), Charlene Myers (Democratic Services Officer) and Barry Russell (Environment Agency)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Paul Bryant, Councillor Dave Goff, Councillor Mike Johnston, Councillor Emma Webster and Councillor Laszlo Zverko

PART I

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

2. **Severe winter weather 2013/2014**

Councillor Brian Bedwell welcomed the Commission and speakers to the review. He reminded attendees that the review sought to establish the effects of the severe weather experienced between December 2013 and March 2014 and then shape recommendations that would influence future responses. The Commission would not look to place blame on Agencies Council Services or Communities.

The review would give agencies the opportunities to discuss their emergency preparedness and the response provided as well as give their version on interagency working, mutual aid, business continuity management and the recovery and the lessons they had learnt.

Thames Valley Police (TVP)

Lindsey Finch (Interim Superintendent) Newbury Police Station provided the response on behalf of Thames Valley Police, she advised that she was the Deputy area Commander in February 2014.

Thames Valley Police received notification that West Berkshire Council had declared a Major Incident (MI) on Friday 7th February 2014. TVP representatives were then committed to the WBC EOC as the point of contact with TVP and to filter information within the organisation where appropriate.

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The Gold Commander at TVP HeadQuarters was made aware of the WBC MI declaration and although initial assessments concluded that TVP would not be required to do the same, TVP later declared a MI on Sunday 9th February 2014. Following the declaration a multiagency Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) was established at Kidlington.

A full command and control structure was established, comprising of a multiagency Strategic Coordinating Group at Kidlington and a Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) at West Berkshire Council Office, Newbury meeting the identified need to create a localised tactical command.

Lindsey Finch was the Silver Commander at the point of establishing the TCG, which was responsible for coordinating the multiagency response at a localised level, liaising with the TCG established in RB&WM and the SCG in Kidlington for joint management of resources and identification of priorities.

The TCG remained in operation for two weeks and coordinated:

- Resources to manage extensive road closures: in the most extreme circumstances road closures were out in place to avoid loss of life, they also limited the effects of bow waves which flooded nearby properties.
- Reassurance within communities: cascading messages within communities and helping residents to relocate household goods from the ground floor.
- Communications: selecting the media channels to be used to cascade messages and leaflet drops within communities.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, Lindsey Finch provided the following information regarding road closures in West Berkshire:

- There were multiple instances of drivers contravening formal road closures, placing themselves at risk and on occasion requiring rescue by RBFRS or TVP.
- Road closures were put in place to avoid drivers exacerbating the flood effects to nearby homes. Bow waves caused significant problems for homes adjacent to flooded roads.
- Prioritising the allocation of resources to oversee certain road closures was sometimes challenging. Consideration was given to the risk associated with drivers breaching the closure and the effect of bow waves. Roads that were particularly affected were:
 - A338, Wantage Road, Great Shefford
 - Bucklebury Ford
 - Lower Way, Thatcham
 - Marsh Beenham (Intermittent, dependant on water levels)
- The demand to supervise road closures placed a strain on TVP resources and had to be considered in conjunction with the resources required to continue normal business.
- TVP recorded the details of drivers who breached road closures, summons had been issued and further action would be taken, although the total number of prosecutions was not known.
- Whilst RBFRS concentrated on assigned duties to provide HPV's, TVP was often required to rescue stranded drivers without having specialist equipment.
- Media channels were used to reinforce the risks associated with driving through flood water.

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Due to the rural nature of West Berkshire, the SCG allocated additional 4x4 vehicles to assist with travel around the district. Staff also cancelled leave to support the manning of the TCG and SCG.

Lindsey Finch advised that overall the multiagency response had been effective, due in part to the early identification of the need to establish a robust decision making process within the TCG. She advised that a lack of attendance from the Environment Agency (EA) within the EOC hindered early decision making. Their advice would have been useful in guiding the allocation of resources and establishment of priorities. Lindsey Finch stressed that the TCG requested a representative from the EA a number of times and finally received a point of contact 3 days after the TCG had been activated. It was noted that a representative had been allocated to RBW&M although they had not declared a MI.

Councillor Bedwell asked whether TVP would be inclined to use the Council facilities again based upon the positive feedback received. Lindsey Finch advised that the site was selected as it was adjacent to the already established EOC and with IT already in place. Selection of the site for future TCG's would depend on the nature of the incident but the Council Offices could be considered as an option for future use.

Lindsey Finch advised that routine business continued alongside the flood response efforts, but that the number of reported crime during the period was significantly lower than usual.

Interoperability between responding agencies was assisted by the use of TVP radios. Sabine Furlong advised that they issued the military with TVP radios which allowed instantaneous contact/updates, provided tasking and avoided duplication of efforts. TVP held 40 radios for issue to partner agencies at short notice.

Councillor Hunneman asked whether TVP would address the demand to man road closures differently in the future. Lindsey Finch advised that in some situations 'hard closures' could be implemented to reinforce a closure. The barrier could not be moved which ensured that motorists adhered to the closure. It was difficult to use the approach in all cases due to the need to ensure Emergency Services access. Lindsey Finch suggested that in order to address the issue communities required educating about the risk to life, the effects on nearby homes of breaching closures and the legal implications. Sabine Furlong advised that the issue was experienced nationally and was not a concern to West Berkshire alone. The topic was escalated to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for advice on the messages which could be issued to the public. The Commission heard that agencies were awaiting advice on the insurance implications if a motor vehicle was stranded within a road closure. It was agreed that such information could deter drivers breaching the closure.

When Commission asked whether the Council could offer support to reinforce road closures, Lindsey Finch advised that she would be happy to explore opportunities going forward.

Councillor Webb asked for a summary of the impact experienced by local power outages and the threat of more occurrences during the period of storms. Lindsey Finch advised that the threat of power outages had posed a significant issue for responders. The initial challenges were caused by the lack of knowledge about local substations and therefore understanding pinch points within the district, areas which might require additional resources in order to maintain their operation had been limited.

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Lindsey Finch provided the Commission with an example of a power outage in East Ilsley which was not highlighted to responders until residents had been without power for two days. Power supply was especially crucial in some cases, as the power was required to maintain water pumps.

The Commission heard that irrespective of the nature of any issue arising during an incident, it was the role of the police to coordinate the multi agency response as detailed within the Civil Contingency Act 2004.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, Lindsey Finch and Sabine Furlong provided the following information:

- The West Berkshire police response was supported by staff from neighbouring areas which enabled staff to rest and maintain normal policing activity. It was understood that not all staff knew the area well but all support offered was utilised to maximum effect.
- Additional support was provided through the allocation of Special Constables and TVP committed 1 Sergeant and 10 Officers specifically to the flood response. They remained in place until 24th February 2014, after which the team was scaled down to 1 Sergeant and 6 Officers until the beginning of March 2014.
- Support from TVP within the EOC was organised by placing experienced Police Sergeants as the point of contact.
- Staffing for the role of Silver Commander in the TCG was achieved through rotation of staff. Not all were experienced but overall the feedback regarding coordination and effectiveness was positive.
- The media should be utilised earlier to cascade messages regarding implications of breaching road closures. In the longer term the messages could help minimise the demand for resources to supervise closures at high risk locations.
- Obtaining sandbags was initially challenging, but when the Sandbag Cell was established accessibility improved.
- Increasing the provision of hard standing barriers would help the force to manage its resources more effectively.
- Longer term measures could be introduced to manage road closures in high risk areas, for instance through the introduction of a gate at the Bucklebury ford.
- Police patrols provided reassurance in communities and assisted with checks on vulnerable people whose details held by the Council and utility companies.
- The total cost of the flood response to TVP was not known and although a submission had been raised to recover costs through the Bellwin scheme, the details were not available.
- Mapping and local knowledge of previously affected areas was extremely helpful during the response and significantly contributed towards the deployment of strategic sandbag walls.
- There was no record of Officers experiencing radio reception difficulties whilst visiting communities within the district.

Councillor Bedwell thanked the Thames Valley Police for their commitment and support and for their participation in the Commission's review.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS)

Paul Jacques advised that the event saw the largest mobilisation of FRS equipment since World War II. Every available High Volume Pump (HVP) was utilised/mobilised

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nationally during the course of the response and Berkshire had been the largest recipient of Fire Rescue Service equipment.

RBFRS had established a 24/7 operations centre to support the flood response at a strategic level, supported by bronze command which was located in Newbury. Additional resources were obtained through Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) arrangements with FRS across the country. 38 of 42 FRS provided mutual aid in Berkshire.

Paul Jacques was the RBFRS representative present during the activation of the TCG in the west of Berkshire. Another TCG was established in the east of Berkshire to oversee the response to flooding in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Paul Jacques stated that by comparison, the West Berkshire TCG was a model structure for command and control arrangements. The Commission heard that in the east of Berkshire the TCG was positioned away from the EOC which hindered communication. The position of the TCG was fundamental in ensuring tasking was not duplicated. Following comparison with West Berkshire, the east of Berkshire TCG followed a similar model and instantly improved communications and decision making. Paul Jacques advised that a crucial element of the TCG's success was ensuring it contained appropriate agency representatives.

The Commission heard that the TCG would have benefitted from the earlier representation from the EA. It was important that agencies in the TCG had the information required to deliver an effective, coordinated response. Decision making could be protracted and understanding the implications of decisions was made more challenging by missing or delayed information.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, Paul Jacques advised the following:

- The RBFRS main focus remained on operating BAU functions and ultimately preserving life.
- RBFRS resources that were deployed specifically for flooding related activities:
 - Pumps – including HVP
 - Generators
 - Outreach vehicles
 - Boat rescues
 - Water rescue crews
 - RBFRS also provided water safety cover to assist the military effort to secure the Kennet Canal breach (which had affected the Burghfield SSE site).
- Flood plans were in place within the TVLRF but they were considered to be generic and therefore work was in motion to consider preplanning within communities. A recommendation had been drafted through the RBFRS debrief report that Local Authorities should develop a plan for each flooded area, detailing the multiagency response and resources required.
- Decisions made within the TCG were often made reactively, with enhanced preplanning the response could have been more considered.
- Work was underway between the Council and RBFRS to develop a plan identifying locations for temporary flood alleviation structures using the knowledge gathered from earlier flood events. The plan would not replace Property Level Protection but could offer emergency service and engineering solutions to minimise flood risks.
- The RFS had provided a HPV and 1.5 Kilometres of hose as directed by the TCG, to alleviate flooding in West Ilsley, East Ilsley and Compton. The military provided sandbag ramps over water hoses to enable residents to maintain access to properties.

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- Drivers contravening road closures sometimes had resulted in emergency rescue which was resource intensive. Messages regarding driver safety were issued by RBFRS and other agencies in an attempt to minimise the number of emergency calls for assistance.
- The RBFRS debrief report would recommend that vehicles were adapted so that they could be used in deeper waters.

Environment Agency (EA)

Barry Russell, Operations Manager, explained that he was the lead for the EA in the Strategic Coordinating Group and was supported by Katherine Doman (Flood Risk Advisor).

The Commission heard that South East England had received 220% of its average rainfall during the winter months. Soil Moisture Deficit levels had been lower than average from November onwards, which had contributed towards the saturation effect subsequently experienced.

Barry Russell explained that 2013/2014 had witnessed an unprecedented volume and duration of rainfall. To set the weather in a historical context, Barry Russell showed that the volume of rain that had fallen had been significantly higher in 2014 than in the 1894 and 1947 floods, both of which had been extreme events. He was however also able to advise that the prolonged period during which it fell meant that the reported number of flooded properties was lower.

The EA had opened the West Thames Area Incident Room (AIR) in Wallingford, Oxfordshire on 23rd December 2013. The AIR was operational for 46 days and staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Barry Russell stated that the scale and length of the incident tested the resilience of agency resources and staff. The EA requested inter-Regional Aid in order to meet the requirement to attend SCGs, TCGs and to carry out operational tasks. In order to meet the required level of response, the EA had augmented their Flood Ambassadors, which enabled more face to face communication with partnership agencies and communities.

125 Ambassadors were sent to 95 locations during the Winter Floods and they provided EA representation on the Council's Flood Bus. The information collected through community visits was passed to the AIR and used to influence response planning.

Barry Russell advised that 70 Flood Data Recorders (FDRs) were sent to over 100 locations to record internal and external property flooding levels during the event. The Information was tracked by the AIR to help develop a picture of the extent of the flooding. The data would also be used to help support the EA in the accuracy and timeliness of future flood warnings.

Using its staff's knowledge of previous flood events, the EA had checked high risk areas in advance of river levels rising to make sure that the rivers were running freely. The EA had deployed temporary defences, cleared blockages and worked with the military to move equipment and build barriers.

As river levels rose in December, the Waterways staff responded by operating the Thames Weirs. The first weirs were fully opened on 19th December 2013 and the majority of weirs were opened by 24th December 2013. Barry Russell advised that between the

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start of January 2014 and the end of February 2014 the Thames Barrier had been closed 43 times. Of those, 39 were to alleviate the fluvial flooding upstream and 4 were to protect Central London from tidal flooding.

The EA issued their first news release on 23 December 2013, warning residents to be prepared for flooding across the West Thames area. More than 36 news releases were issued overall. The EA had been integral to the process of warning people about flood risk from main rivers and the sea, as well as managing the effects of flooding.

On 9th February 2014 the EA issued 14 Severe Weather Warnings (SFWs) for locations on the River Thames. The decision to issue SFWs was based on the forecasted rainfall and subsequent predictions that river levels would be higher than those in 2003 and potentially as high as those witnessed in 1947.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, representatives from the EA provided the following information:

- Normal operations had been affected by the level of emergency response required and the EA Business Continuity Plan was invoked in order to prioritise services and the use of resources. In some respects business continuity arrangements continued due to the extent of the impacts.
- Debriefs had taken place and the resultant learning would inform future planning. Preplanning with partner agencies enhanced preparedness and paid dividends during the course of the response.
- The function of the Thames Barrier was to control the effects of East Coast surges and incoming tides, to alleviate river levels upstream at periods of low tide and hold back water upstream at periods of high tide before reopening the gates.
- EA staff were assigned to support the East Berkshire TCG as a priority due to the forecasted impacts downstream. Ideally the EA would have attended both TCGs from the offset, but identifying the staff to do so was challenging. Overall the EA attendance at Berkshire TCGs was considered by the agency to have been sufficient and timely. It was recognised however that if more resources were available then staff would have been available sooner.
- As a national agency, the EA had a wide geographical area to cover which had presented logistical challenges to the movement and availability of staff.
- The EA expected that agencies and communities would react to the notification of an SFW by increasing the availability of their resources, remaining vigilant and reviewing the courses of action to be taken in response.
- The newly introduced Newbury Flood Alleviation Scheme had worked well although it was acknowledged that some further improvements might be identified as a result of the severe weather. The scheme provided protection against fluvial flooding but not surface water flooding.
- There were no capital schemes to fund flood alleviation measures in Shaw at this time. It was acknowledged that management was required but work could be restricted by the nature of the chalk streams.
- Private owners of weirs along the River Kennet were often unsure who they should contact to obtain guidance regarding the management of the weir. The EA acknowledged that they were not certain how the weirs along the River Kennet should function. Once weirs were fully open, there was no further action that could be taken.
- The EA and LA worked with riparian owners to encourage effective management of their respective sections along the water course. It was not the function of either agency to provide management.

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- The EA worked closely with the Canal and River Trust to oversee the management of the Kennet Canal.
- The media had focused on the benefits of dredging, particular during the Somerset Levels flooding. A study undertaken to consider the benefits of dredging the River Thames had concluded that the river was self-scouring and therefore that manual intervention would be of limited value. Where appropriate, the EA silted tributaries of the River Thames.
- The EA policy on dredging had not changed following recent flooding. The process was resource intensive and not viable in the current financial climate. In most cases the benefits of dredging were negligible.
- The recorded number of flooded properties, which was different to that held by the Council, reflected the information provided to the EA. It was speculated that residents may have been deterred from notifying the EA because of the insurance implications if their property had been formally recorded as flooded.
- Flood forums provided a useful mechanism to engage with communities and monitor developments in local areas.
- The flood wardens offered an invaluable service as local points of contact and provided opportunities to access local knowledge.

In response to questions asked regarding the effectiveness of sandbags, the EA advised the following:

- They were most effective when used as strategic level protection rather than for property level protection
- Although they provided reassurance to communities, it was a false security. The EA had had reports of residents fighting over sandbags.
- The recovery from communities of sandbags was logistically challenging and required manpower and the provision of health advice.
- They were cheap and relatively easy to store in advance.
- They provided no protection against groundwater flooding

Councillor Bedwell thanked the EA for their contribution towards the review and support during the recent winter weather.

Scottish and Southern Electric – Power Distribution Network (SSE PDN)

Alex Howison, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, explained that the organisation covered all electrical distribution equipment for the south of England and Scotland.

The Commission heard that the organisation had a mechanism for identifying events which could impact certain specific operations, that had been designated by OFGEM. During an average winter SSE could be expected to declare 3 or 4 Extreme Events. During the period between December 2013 and March 2014 SSE declared 37 Extreme Events.

In order to manage the response within SSE PDN they created a Storm control room in Portsmouth to coordinate staff, oversee staff welfare and the allocation of resources and equipment.

Following the presentation of flood issues in February 2014, SSE PDN had created a flood control room in Slough. Alex Howison explained that the control rooms were managed separately to one another but in hindsight they were required to share a lot of information and it may have been beneficial if they had shared a location.

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Power supply was managed effectively and there were no prolonged periods of power outage during the severe weather. Alex Howison advised that the power distribution network had the ability to redirect power from alternative substations in order to maintain supply.

SSE PDN understood which substations were at risk from flood water or storms, and measures were in place to mitigate the risks through effective preplanning. Preplanning also enhanced the effectiveness of technical, internal responses.

External communications was managed by the flood control room, Alex Howison acknowledged that the control room had been overwhelmed with incoming intelligence and had struggled to provide information outwards. Further work would take place to review the effectiveness of SSE PDN communications, concentrating on delivering a better customer experience and issuing prompt communications to partner agencies.

In order to improve communications with Parish Councils and partner agencies SSE would establish a Customer and Communities Team. Their key focus would be to establish themselves as a point of contact for their area. They would develop a greater level of understanding of the community issues and needs which would be shared within the organisation, especially when a heightened level of response was required.

Alex Howison advised that they now understood the benefits of using local media to communicate with residents during prolonged outages and the sharing of information with Emergency Planning Officers and Emergency Services.

Subsequent to the management of any recent severe weather, SSE PSN had aligned its areas affected by power outages to be organised according to Local Authority Boundaries.

Alex Howison concluded by stating that he felt the SSE PDN response had been managed effectively, however, it was recognised throughout the organisation that their involvement had ceased as agencies transferred their focus onto recovery.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, Matt Anderson and Alex Howison advised the following:

- The West Berkshire local Distribution Depot was at Theale, secondary stations were position in Andover and Reading.
- During an Extreme Event the resources at a depot were coordinated through the Storm Control Room.
- It became clear that information gathered by engineers at the depot was not always relayed back to the Storm Control Room. Managing the flow of information and improving communication links would be addressed by SSE PDN.
- Communication with the WBC EOC was considered sufficient, however, going forward it would be preferable if the contact link between SSE PDN and partner agencies was from the local depot.
- SSE issued text messages to residents who had signed up to the alert service. The messages detailed expected durations of any outages so that alternative arrangements could be made by customers if necessary.
- The response was supported by engineers from Scotland and contractors had been placed on standby. Additional resources could have been obtained through other distributors if necessary.

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- Welfare of staff (including provision of overnight accommodation)was managed though the Storm Control Room.
- Substations remained operational during the course of storms and flooding, although localised issues were experienced when power lines were damaged due to fallen trees and a programme of Resilience Cuts had subsequently been developed to maintain areas at risk of interruption. The main focus was in areas adjacent to 30000 volt lines.
- SSE PDN held a list of vulnerable people which residents could sign up to voluntarily.
- SSE was lobbying alongside other providers to see that information could be shared between organisations during times of emergencies to ensure the vulnerable receive resources.

The Commission heard that there were 2 sites placed at high risk in West Berkshire: the distribution centre at Burghfield and the substation at Southcote. The Burghfield site experienced significant flooding in December 2012, following which measures were introduced to improve resilience on site. The site was threatened again in February 2014, at which point additional resources were requested from the Military via the TCG and in liaison with WBC.

Matt Anderson explained that the Burghfield site was responsible for providing 120,000 homes with power. SSE PDN had improved network resilience by interlinking the power supply between secondary sites and therefore the power, if required, could be redirected to minimise the impact on residents.

SSE depot site in Theale was flooded and the company was unable to use the facilities on site. In order to manage staff welfare, engineers' were relocated to an alternative depot.

Overall SSE was now focused on improving its communication with partners and residents. In addition they had a programme of works underway to maximise resilience of the PDN for future events.

Councillor Bedwell thanked Alex Howison and Matt Anderson for their participation and support during the recent severe weather response.

Thames Water (TW)

Hilary Murgatroyd summarised the view of events from the perspective of Thames Water. The Commission heard that the severe weather impacted the organisation from 23rd December 2013 when the sewage network was affected by rising water levels infiltrating the system.

In response to events, Thames Water attended 7 Strategic Coordinating Groups, one in each of the seven Local Resilience areas the company worked within. In addition Thames Water was requested to provide mutual aid to other water companies which had also been affected by the severe weather.

The response effort had placed a large strain on the organisation's resources that had been required to attend to operational matters and contribute towards strategic planning. In order to manage the demand and to ensure a local focus was maintained, managers were assigned roles that supported the flood response within defined and discrete areas.

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Hilary Murgatroyd advised that of the 2500 Thames Water pumping stations, 900 were overwhelmed due to water ingress, 450 of which were out of operation completely. Thames Water committed 100 tankers to alleviate critical issues along the network.

The Commission heard that since 2013 Thames Water had changed their policy on the use of tankers. Tankers would be prioritised to areas where known faults had arisen. It was considered impractical to use tankers in locations where the system was completely overwhelmed with water.

Overall the response provided by Thames Water was considered successful, however, it was recognised that the organisation had had to adapt their response to meet demands during the course of the event. Internal communications were robust and the support provided by staff was admirable.

Thames Water recognised that external communications required further work. The information collated by operational staff was crucial for keeping customers and partner agencies up to date had not always been forthcoming. In order to address the gap in future, Thames Water would focus on establishing stronger customer relationships, cascading messages through local and national media channels. Pre-planning work was currently underway to improve communications.

Following the learning achieved during the response, the telephony system had been updated and the logging system enabled call handlers to establish common trends in specific geographical areas and to allocate resources to investigate. Hilary Murgatroyd explained that capacity was sometimes limited by the necessity to assign engineers to individual tasks. Going forward, the system would provide a holistic view of the issues experienced by residents in a single geographical area and resources could be assigned accordingly.

In response to questions asked, Thames Water provided the following information:

- The waste water network was designed so that a degree of water infiltration was expected, however, recent water ingress levels had overwhelmed the network.
- Work was underway to identify vulnerable sections of the pipe which would benefit from the application of sealant. Private networks leading from the Thames Water mains to properties might also benefit from sealant but such work would be the responsibility of the home owner.
- RBFRS equipment was not suitable for the pumping of effluent from the waste water network or pumping stations.
- It was recognised that more communication from Thames Water was required by communities and that many residents received conflicting advice or updates which left them feeling frustrated. Gaps in communication could have been managed earlier and efforts were underway to address this for the future.
- More staff could be assigned to the customer contact centre if the volume of calls to Thames Water increased significantly. Resources could not be requested from other organisations or agencies but sufficient internal training provided Thames Water with the flexibility to temporarily redeploy staff into call handling roles.
- The issue identified at Newbury train station had been investigated by Thames Water, the Council and Network Rail. The three agencies were working together to resolve the matter as soon as possible. The details of their investigation would be shared with the Commission.
- Portalooos were not provided by Thames Water due to the nature of the event. Thames Water assets were overwhelmed with ground water and surface water,

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neither of which reflected the performance capabilities of the network. The provision of portals therefore was not the responsibility of Thames Water.

- In order to prevent water infiltrating the network in future, work was underway to seal manhole covers in key locations. It was expected that if the volume of water infiltration was controlled then the impact on residents' facilities would be minimised.
- Surcharging could not be resolved by increasing the capacity of the network. Instead engineers would investigate how the water ingress could be minimised.
- If a treatment plant become overwhelmed due to water levels then Thames Water had dispensation not to treat a percentage of waste water received. The EA allowed Thames Water to discharge excess treated water into the environment if storage capacity was exceeded. If such an event were to occur then tests would take place to ensure that the treatment works were operating within regulated levels.
- Representation from Thames Water at the West Berkshire TCG and EOC had been limited by the availability of resources. The organisation covered a large geographical area and coordinating resources was challenging. In order to cope with demand across an expansive area Thames Water allocated a manager to each LRF, the arrangement improved contact and communications.

Councillor Bedwell thanked Hilary Murgatroyd, Sarah Burchard and Andrew Hagget for their contribution towards the review.

Sovereign Housing Association (SHA)

Matthew Hensby summarised the effects of the recent severe weather, as experienced by SHA.

The main focus through the course of the event was to provide support to residents and protect SHA assets. Of all Sovereign's housing the stock, the impact had been felt most severely in West Berkshire and Basingstoke.

In West Berkshire 2 properties had flooded internally and a further 7 residents had been re-housed. One resident was offered the opportunity to be relocated due to the effects that the weather had had on their property but they wished to remain in their home.

Sandbags were delivered to social housing properties at risk of flooding. SHA worked in conjunction with the Council to identify the need for and delivery of bags for properties adjacent to SHA properties also. Decommissioned properties were re-commissioned as contingency against the requirement for emergency re-housing.

SHA established their Emergency Plan on 10th February in response to the increased demand on resources and deteriorating weather conditions. The Health and Safety Team acted as the point of contact for the flood response within SHA, setting clear roles and responsibilities for the staff involved. Matthew Hensby advised that SHA felt the response had been managed effectively, however a review would take place to identify elements for improvement and to minimise the strain on services during future responses.

Nick Gessey advised that he managed the SHA response via the activation of the Critical Incident Team, Business Continuity Management (BCM) and the disaster recovery effort. The Critical Incident Team were working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at the peak of the SHA response and had been overseen by a SHA Silver Command. The two

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worst affected areas had been Buckskin in Basingstoke and Shaw in West Berkshire and tasks were prioritised by the Silver Command accordingly.

The coordination of activity with the West Berkshire Council EOC was effective and ensured that priority was given to the most vulnerable sites and local residents. Nick Gessey advised that the use of maps and knowledge of flood risks in the area had helped with the allocation of sandbags to residents.

Nick Gessey acknowledged that collaborative working with the West Berkshire Council EOC had been beneficial during the response, adding that SHA withdrew from joint working as agencies began to focus on recovery. SHA had subsequently determined that going forward it would provide support throughout the response and recovery phases.

Councillor Brian Bedwell invited the Neighbourhood Wardens to comment on the response provided by the team. The Commission received the following information:

- The team had worked tirelessly to assist residents but the response could have been managed more effectively if additional assistance had been available sooner.
- The team had access to Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and 4x4s to aid response.
- It would have been beneficial for some form of training on how to build an effective sandbag wall to have been provided prior to the arrival of the weather.
- Interaction with the EOC was frequent and informative. In response to the demand for regular updates neighbourhood wardens created a daily report containing local flood updates and photos which they then relayed back to the EOC.
- The team had adapted to the needs of the response. Shift patterns were altered in order to maximise working time during daylight hours and staff visited areas outside normal patrol routes to increase the assistance they could give to other agencies.
- SHA had recognised the benefits of placing an Officer in the EOC to make assessments based on the information immediately available.

Councillor Macro noted that SHA was only one of many social housing providers in the district. Carolyn Richardson agreed that work was required to link into all social housing providers, to pre plan together and to understand the capabilities and needs of each of the organisation and their tenants.

Carolyn Richardson asked whether SHA had identified a need for Property Level Protection following recent events. Matthew Hensby advised that work was underway in Purely to reinforce property boundaries which had previously allowed water to flow through fencing and threaten people's homes.

Councillor Brain Bedwell thanked SHA for their contribution and support. Matthew Hensby advised that SHA would collate the findings from their internal debrief and share the lessons learnt with the Council.

Military – Joint Regional Liaison Officer (JRLO)

Lieutenant Colonel PCE Mileham RA advised that his role as JRLO was to act as the representative for the Ministry of Defence in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight LRF and Thames Valley LRF. He had been the initial point of contact for both LRFs during the recent severe weather. Lieutenant Colonel Mileham advised that, as defined within the

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Civil Contingency Act 2004, the Military was not considered as either a Category One or Category Two responder and therefore was not bound to the same duties.

The Commission heard that the situation was being managed effectively by agencies but when, on 7th February, forecasts suggested that the weather conditions would deteriorate rapidly, West Berkshire Council declared a Major Incident. In anticipation that additional resources might be required through a Military Assistance to Civil Authorities (MACA) tasking, 7 Rifles was redirected to West Berkshire.

Initially military aid was provided to minimise the threat presented by flood water at a Scottish and Southern Power Distribution Site in Burghfield. Sandbags walls were built to secure a breach identified along the Kennet Canal.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, Lieutenant Colonel Mileham advised the following:

- Although MACA provided a clearly process for the activation of military aid, Joint Doctrine also allowed for a rapid mobilisation, through the authorisation of the local Brigade Commander, in circumstances such as those in evidence at Burghfield.
- Hampshire had suffered similar effects to West Berkshire and, in his opinion, they too should have declared a Major Incident. It was preferable to declare a MI at an earlier stage and scale back if necessary rather than leave it too late and have to provide assistance in haste.
- Initially military staff had limited access to suitable PPE, therefore the safety of staff was overseen by RBFRS. During the course of the response the MoD purchased waders, throw lines, life jackets and wellington boots.
- The level of military aid was increased following a visit to Wraybury by the Secretary of State for Defence. The scale of the disruption and damage caused by the severe weather was made evident to him and consequently a further 15 Army, Navy and RAF units were deployed to assist with the response efforts.
- Military decision making was delegated to the lowest appropriate level in order to maximise effectiveness. Throughout the course of the MACA period, the local Commander was provided sufficient authority to agree tasking which in turn ensured a prompt response.
- Military aid assisted communities by moving furniture away from flood water, building sandbag walls and general reassurance tasks as assigned by the local TCG.

Councillor Hunneman asked for more detail on the involvement of the military in the build up to an incident and prior to the declaration of a MI. Lieutenant Colonel Mileham advised that as JRLO he would be invited to join all LRF teleconferences.

The Commission heard how the Military was tasked with the deployment of sandbags and developing the store at Chieveley Depot. Lieutenant Colonel Mileham stated that the availability of sandbags quickly became an issue as demand increased rapidly. The Council's Chieveley depot was designated as a Sand Bag Cell and was used as one of two strategic locations in Thames Valley to receive, store and distribute sandbags. The scale of the demand for and distribution of sandbags made the military aid for the delivery of these tasks crucial. Lieutenant Colonel Mileham observed that sandbags offered reassurance within communities but agreed that responsibility for the protection of properties rested with the homeowner.

Due to the weight of material and limited suitability of assets from statutory responders, a national supermarket chain offered its lorries as transport for the sandbags. Councillor

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Macro suggested that it would be useful to have a national list of assets which could be utilised to transport sandbags.

The Commission heard that the sandbag cell had been managed by the Resource Cell in Kildlington and staffed by the military and Volkens. A large number of sandbags were left at the depot when the response phase had ended and it had taken an inordinate amount of time to remove them during the recovery phase. It was likely that the number of sandbags required would need to be reviewed along with the Council Sandbag Policy.

Lieutenant Colonel Mileham advised that the Military was in the process of restructuring but that a key focus would continue to be homeland protection. Civil protection units would be created to link in with Local Authorities to provide localised contacts and stronger working relationships

Councillor Bedwell thanked Lieutenant Colonel Mileham for his participation in the review and support offered by the forces during recent severe weather.

(The meeting commenced at 9.00 am and closed at 4.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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Appendix D

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

Councillors Present: Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Sheila Ellison, Roger Hunneman, Alan Macro, Garth Simpson, Virginia von Celsing and Quentin Webb

Also Present: Stuart Clark (Principal Engineer (Projects)), Carolyn Richardson (Civil Contingencies Manager) and Stephen Stace, Brian Connorton, Kay Lacey, David Lowe (Scrutiny & Partnerships Manager), Charlene Myers (Democratic Services Officer) and Mark Richardson

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeff Brooks, Councillor Dave Goff, Councillor Mike Johnston, Councillor Emma Webster and Councillor Laszlo Zverko

PART I

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

2. Severe Winter Weather 2013/2014

Councillor Brian Bedwell welcomed Members to the third meeting of the Severe Weather review. Members were advised that the meeting scheduled for 15th September 2014 would be cancelled in order that Officers could collate the notes from previous meetings and form a report ahead for Members to consider. David Lowe advised that the draft report would be issued to Members for consideration on 23rd September and subsequently discussed at the meeting on 30th September 2014.

Councillor Bedwell welcomed Carolyn Richardson and Stuart Clark to the review and asked that them to provide information on:

- The community self-help model
- Public understanding
- The debrief survey results

Carolyn Richardson explained that the community self-help model relied on community spirit to enhance resilience. The model had been developed since the flood event in 2007, when agency resources had been limited and collaborative working with residents was crucial. The Council provided Emergency Plan templates to Parish Councils and specific areas where risks had been identified. The template was developed to aid community resilience planning. Carolyn Richardson also held workshops if additional advice was required.

The Commission heard that strengthening community resilience was a slow process. Often the most engaged communities were those who had experienced an incident in the past and therefore realised the potential for reoccurrences. Community planning was

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beneficial as often the local residents had the local knowledge to identify risks and consider solutions.

In order to increase community engagement and enhance resilience planning agencies visited communities direct and helped establish Flood Wardens who acted as the main point of contact for their respective communities.

Carolyn Richardson explained that flood wardens were often relied upon by agencies and communities. As it was most often the case that the flood warden volunteers were also members of the Parish Council or of other volunteer groups, their availability was sometimes restricted. More significantly, flood wardens sometimes suffered from their properties flooding, which caused them immense personal pressure and stress.

Overall the community self-help model was successful if agencies and communities worked together. This had evident where Flood Forums had been established. Carolyn Richardson advised that Flood Forums had been set up in the Lambourn Valley, Pang Valley, Newbury, Thatcham, Streatley and Purley. With the input from agencies, the forums produced and then monitored action plans to address flood risk.

In general, rural communities were more engaged with their local Flood Forum than were urban communities and consequently had a better understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities of home owners and agencies. Council survey results had highlighted that well established flood forums provided more focused suggestions for future flood responses. They had a higher portion of residents registered to receive the Environment Agency flood line alerts and warnings.

It was still apparent that public understanding varied across communities. Carolyn Richardson referred to the local residents' survey results which concluded that the majority of respondents believed it was the responsibility of the Council to protect household properties. It appeared that residents were aware of potential risks but required explicit instructions from agencies before they would consider mitigation measures.

Councillor Hunneman suggested that the volunteer flood warden groups could be extended as points of contact for wider resilience issues. Carolyn Richardson concurred, stating that work was underway to enhance the remit of flood wardens.

Amplifying the points raised by Carolyn Richardson, Stuart Clark advised that residents appeared to expect that the Council and EA would eliminate flood risks even though neither agency had a duty or received funding to do so. Stuart Clark suggested that home owners needed to consider long term mitigation measures. This was especially so if they lived adjacent to a watercourse, but was also necessary in areas which suffered from ground water and surface water flooding.

Advice had been issued to communities in the past and work was underway to continue the provision of home owner preparedness messages in the future. However, Stuart Clark stated that how the advice was received depended on residents' recognition and acceptance of the risks. It was suggested that communities at higher risk should be targeted for support and action in the shorter term.

In response to questions asked by the Commission, Stuart Clark and Carolyn Richardson advised the following:

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- Flood resilience messages were most successful when delivered through face to face communications in communities i.e at flood events and meetings.
- No two flood events were the same, and the tailoring of messages about preparedness and the development of agency schemes to minimise flood impacts were challenging. As an example, the flood alleviation scheme introduced in Thatcham had been designed to protect against a 1 in 100 year flood event but, as the recent severe weather (considered to be a 1 in 250 year flood event) had demonstrated, the risk of flooding would never be entirely eliminated.
- Parish Councils provided a good means of communicating with communities and messages had been issued through them between December 2013 and June 2014. Not all Parish Councils however had passed on to residents the information that they had received.
- A communication strategy specifically focusing on the needs to inform the public on flood risks was considered to be hugely beneficial.

Carolyn Richardson highlighted the following key points from the surveys that had been carried out by the Council:

- The survey invited businesses, residents, flood wardens, Members and Parish Councils to comment on the response provided by the Council and sought their views on self-help.
- 229 residents contributed towards the debrief (3.5% of the West Berkshire population)
- 6 Business contributed provided their feedback which was considered to be a very small portion of the businesses impacted during the recent severe weather.
- The main findings from the results were;
 - The public had a reasonable understanding of the various flood types, how they believed they were affected and the response required
 - There was evidence of psychological impacts
 - Preplanning was inconsistent across communities – some prepared plans in advance whilst others reacted to events without any form of preplanning. There was an evident need to educate communities about the benefits of preplanning.
 - 55% of residents said they had signed up to the EA Floodline which was not consistent with the number reported by the EA. It was possible that the statistics used by the EA contained historical information from previous homeowners which suggested that more work was required to encourage new home owners to sign up to the Floodline alerts system.
 - There was a need to review the process through which homeowners registered themselves to received alerts and updates from utilities companies.
 - The perceived level of responsibility for recovery of resources such as sandbags varied considerably between communities.
 - Local community groups shared information through the use of social media groups. If it were to participate in these local groups, the Council would be able to pass updates to residents instantaneously.
 - 24% of responders said they would be happy to volunteer their time and assist with the response during future events.
 - There was evidence that the roles and responsibilities were not fully understood by respondents, which then caused a mis-match in expectations for response. Specifically, whilst 79% of residents suggested that the Council could improve its response, 55% of residents stated that they would not change their own response.
 - The Parish and Town Council feedback highlighted that they had a clearer understanding of the response effort required and the roles and responsibilities

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of agencies and home owners. They had provided feasible and realistic suggestions for future improvements.

- The business survey results suggested that there was a gap in the understanding and utilisation of Business Continuity Management plans and that the business community might benefit from further education and advice.

Carolyn Richardson highlighted the following key that might be taken forward:

1. Promotion to residents of the benefits of signing up to Floodline, the implementation of Property Level Protection and the provision of education about the respective roles and responsibilities of home owners and agencies.
2. Use of local social media groups, contact centres, the Council website and Liaison Officers to communicate with communities and individual residents.
3. Encouragement of pre-planning to enhance resilience within communities through the promotion of the Emergency Plan template, expanding the remit of flood wardens, encouraging more volunteers to come forward and the promotion of BCM to the business community.
4. Review of agencies procedures for:
 - Managing road closures
 - The use of sandbags
 - Communications issued by agencies and utility companies.
 - Understanding the implications around existing development control guidelines to aid property resilience.

Stuart Clark advised that the Council had recently contacted Parish Councils and asked them to identify the roads that had been affected by flooding. The information received would be used to consider response solutions that might minimise future adverse effects on drivers or determine whether there was a need for permanent signage.

Councillor Bedwell asked who would be responsible for providing PLP measure if an applicant for development was granted permission in a known flood risk area and was informed in response that it would remain the responsibility of the home owner or developer. Stuart Clark advised that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stated that development should be avoided in flood risk areas, or where unavoidable, suitable measures should be taken to mitigate the risks. It was stated that the developer's flood risk assessment should take such matters into account.

Councillor Hunneman highlighted the issues experienced by residents in Shaw, specifically where drainage networks linked to the river. He suggested that non-return valves could have avoided much of the flooding. Stuart Clark agreed and stated that schemes could be revisited after implementation if changes were required.

The following points were raised during further discussion;

- The Council sandbag policy was being adhered to until Central Government direction authorised the supply of all necessary resources to prevent further disruption. Despite this, the Council's policy remains that it will not supply sandbags unless the resident is deemed vulnerable or the property is at imminent risk of flooding.
- Communications regarding flood resilience and preparations for the coming winter would be issued to communities shortly.

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- Homeowners could purchase more resilient material to protect their home from builders' merchants. They were however noticeably more expensive than conventional materials.
- Thames Water was often consulted during the planning process and rarely objected to an application.
- The Local Flood Risk Strategy did not address communications for flood awareness and incident updates. A separate communications strategy or plan was consequently required.
- There was no duty under the Highways Act for local authorities to maintain access to roads that had been flooded and if West Berkshire Council were expected to do so there would be financial implications. Any determination for the carrying out of such work would be made on the basis of risk and benefit.
- Residents were frustrated by the difficulties they faced trying to obtain updates from agencies over the phone. Residents often contacted the Council due to them not knowing which agency they needed to contact. It was suggested that the Council could enhance the service of the Customer Centre during an incident by providing callers with updates issued to them by other agencies.

Councillor Bedwell thanked Stuart Clark and Carolyn Richardson for their presentation and support during the recent severe weather event.

Adult Social Care

Following the request made by Members at the meeting on 1st September 2014 the Adult Social Care Service was invited back to the Commission to provide a more detailed account of the impacts it had faced during the course of the severe weather.

Stephen Stace proceeded to explain that he represented the service on behalf of Tandra Forster who was unable to make the meeting. He would provide information regarding the impact experienced by the service, vulnerable adults and his own experience of the EOC function.

Stephen Stace advised that overall the impact upon vulnerable adults had been minimal, although there were sporadic instances across the district where care homes had had to activate contingency plans or consider alternative locations for residents. Stephen Stace informed the Commission that at Aliceby Court the roof had leaked into 4 flats. As the provider had not had a BCM plan available, the Council was required to assist the landlord through the provision of alternative accommodation for 4 residents.

Most providers did however have BCM plans in place and such details were checked through the assessments conducted by the Care Quality Commission.

There was an instance where care workers had experienced difficulties accessing a domiciliary care user due to the deterioration of the entrance road. Consequently the resident was moved to ensure that their care arrangements could be delivered.

The service supported a sheltered housing scheme which had had significant levels of water in the car park and which had also threatened some of its ground floor flats. The Council established a rest centre at the Phoenix Centre where 3 residents resided for 48 hours, until alternative arrangements could be made by the landlord.

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Stephen Stace advised that incidents were managed swiftly and efficiently, however the service should have activated the BCM plan as the requirement to maintain core operations whilst simultaneously supporting the flood response had placed a strain on staff and other resources.

In response to questions asked by the commission Stephen Stace advised the following:

- The service and EOC used RAISE to identify vulnerable people receiving care packages commissioned by the Council. Using the information, daily welfare checks were conducted by staff in those areas affected by the weather.
- The service was keen to expand the list of vulnerable people during an incident to include the details recorded by other agencies. It was however appreciated that Data Protection laws meant that any mechanism that might be introduced must have had thorough consideration.
- The Council held a list of establishments across the district which could be used as rest centres. Factors such as the facilities required and the number of people requiring temporary accommodation determined which rest centres would be activated.
- If specialist accommodation was required then mutual aid arrangements could be requested from other care homes providers, either locally or outside the district.
- While resources could be directed to assist people in receipt of care, the Council would not know about residents with independent care arrangements who might also need attention.
- Willow's Edge care home had been under threat of flooding due to the encroaching water from the River Lambourn. They had used sandbags to construct a barrier around the boundary of the site and considered the period of time required to evacuate the home if necessary. The situation was monitored closely by staff at the care home and Council Officers. Since then the site had considered work to prevent significant disruption in the future.
- The service had been aware of those instances where carers had been unable to visit residents. The service had rearranged visits (via other carers) or considered alternative accommodation if the issue related to accessing the home.
- Adult Social Care staff would benefit from EOC training to help them understand the duties involved with the various roles.
- The rota for visits to recipients of care packages was overseen by the service. Where necessary hours were altered to ensure adequate cover and contingency. Carers had access to 4x4 vehicles following lessons that had been learnt during previous weather events.
- Additional 4x4 transport could be requested through the Transport Team. Vehicles were placed on standby for Officers to use if the Council was responding to an incident.
- Welfare checks often identified residents who had self evacuated. Recognising that it might have been beneficial if the clients had contacted the Council in advance, to avoid unnecessary visits or the heightening of concerns if the Council was unable to reach them, there was not a great deal that could be done about it.

The Commission discussed the challenges faced by displacing vulnerable clients. The review in 2007 established that the police would not have the powers to remove someone from their home if they did not want to leave. Stephen Stace advised that he was aware of some cases where residents had wished to remain in the home regardless of the risk.

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Councillor Bedwell thanked Stephen Stace for his contribution towards the review and support during the response.

The Commission asked Carolyn Richardson whether she felt the Council had sufficient resources to cope with transportation around the district and for assessments of the area. Carolyn Richardson advised that the Transport Team allocated 2 4x4 vehicles for the EOC which did limit the opportunity for community visits. If necessary however the Council could approach other agencies or voluntary organisations to request additional transport.

The Commission discussed the use of a drone during flood events. It was stated that Thames Valley Police and the military had used aerial assessments to understand the how the situation was developing and they had proved extremely useful. It was agreed that need to have similar resources available should be explored, with questions on which agency might purchase and maintain any remotely controlled vehicle to be addressed at a later stage.

Councillor Simpson asked whether thought had been given towards the use of caravan parks as accommodation for displaced residents. Carolyn Richardson stated that the option might be appropriate for a displaced community and would be considered. The majority of residents appeared to have insurance, therefore, accommodation would be arranged through their providers.

Community

Councillor Bedwell invited local residents to provide their comments on the impacts of the severe weather on their communities and the responses provided by themselves, the Council and others.

Mark Richardson (East Ilsley) began by explaining that 6 homes in East Ilsley had been evacuated due to internal flooding and that ground water, surface water and sewage had threatened many properties in West Ilsley, East Ilsley and Compton. The most severe case of sewage flooding had been experienced in West Ilsley causing a loss of facilities and a reliance on portaloos that had lasted for 4 weeks.

Mark Richardson advised that the agency response was overall relatively good and the military aid had provided reassurance in communities, he believed however that residents felt the joint response could have been more effective. Mark Richardson provided the example of RBFRS resources being allocated to the Pang Valley to alleviate the flood risk from West Ilsley further down the valley. He stated that the methodology was misguided as the positioning of equipment had offered limited relief and failed to improve the situation. The process of transporting water through a series of High Volume Pumps down the Pang Valley had failed to address the need to increase volumes of water as it was moved further down the valley. The process had only maintained water levels at the lower locations, it had not reduced them. Furthermore, RBFRS did not have sufficient equipment to position the HPV in the correct location.

Residents felt that their comments regarding the suitable location of equipment had been ignored and subsequently agencies had implemented solutions which offered little benefit. Mark Richardson stressed that the assistance provided by RBFRS helped maintain the situation and residents appreciated their efforts, however, it was ashamed that they were unable to position the resource where it was needed most.

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Mark Richardson suggested that in future flood alleviation measures might be considered alongside Abingdon Road which was the area most affected by water travelling downstream from West Ilsley.

Communication from the Council during the incident was frequent and informative. The daily emails had aided planning and provided an appreciation for the situation across the district.

Flood Forums were now continuing to monitor progress against identified actions which had been assigned to agencies. The group acted as a pressure group for local communities which agency representatives also attended. Mark Richardson stated that the Parish Council was responsible for creating the Emergency Plan and the Flood Forum monitored the progress of the action plan.

Residents were frustrated with the lack of updates being provided by agencies to and through the Flood Forum. He was aware of some remedial work underway to address areas highlighted during the floods but was disappointed that agencies had failed to share the details with communities.

Kay Lacey (Pangbourne) advised that Thames Water had agreed to send to the Flood Forum the reports arising from their investigations but as yet the information had not materialised. A direct contact had recently been assigned to the Pang Valley and it was anticipated that contact between the Parish Councils and Thames Water would now improve.

Councillor Hunneman asked for the community's opinion on the effectiveness of sandbags. Kay Lacey stated that residents expected sandbags to be delivered as they had been offered in the past. Sandbags were most effective as a tool for community reassurance rather than as a flood prevention measure. Kay Lacey advised that the effectiveness of sandbags was questionable however the media depicted flood response through images of sandbags being deployed. This raised both demand and expectation in communities. However, any form of temporary measure was only useful if the event enabled sufficient time for resources to be deployed. Kay Lacey stressed that flood levels had risen slowly and had therefore provided an opportunity for residents to consider action, which might not be the case in the future. Carolyn Richardson reinforced the benefits of residents considering Property Level Protection measures.

It was agreed that storing flood prevention equipment would be beneficial as it was often difficult to obtain resources during the course due to the demand of competing communities. As sandbags were known to deteriorate relatively quickly, a sound method of managing the storage of them was proving difficult to find, although polypropylene bags had a longer lifespan.

David Lowe asked whether it was the perception of residents that the reasonability to protect homes rested with agencies rather than home owners. Mark Richardson advised that in many cases home owners were still waiting for insurance companies to agree remedial work before they could consider additional protection measures. The Commission heard that many residents understood that they had a responsibility as home owners to protect their own property. It was noted however that the survey results considered earlier in the meeting had indicated that the understanding was far from universal.

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Kay Lacey advised that the Flood Forum promoted the Repair and Renewal Grant which offered funding for the implementation of PLP. The Commission recognised that residents in rural areas had made significantly more effort to protect their homes before the most recent event than had those in urban areas.

Brian Connerton (Standford Dingley) stated that he agreed with the comments made on the desirability of storing flood alleviation equipment and the need to consider the durability of sandbags. He stated that Standford Dingley had been affected during the 2007 floods and that subsequently a significant amount of work had been undertaken to protect properties. He believed that homeowners in Standford Dingley understood their responsibilities.

Brian Connerton explained that the main issues experienced in Standford Dingley related to the impacts from sewage, specifically the lack of maintenance of a local Thames Water pumping station. Following the severe weather incident, Thames Water had initiated work to remediate the issue but since then the project coordinator had moved roles. The lack of consistency raised concerns for residents that the issue would not be addressed.

Brain Connerton fully supported the work of Thames Water to introduce a single point of contact. He was complimentary of the response provided by the Council.

The Commission explored the desirability of a central resource store. The following points were raised:

- They required time to establish and therefore if the incident occurred with little or no warning then the arrangement would fail.
- The distribution of sandbags required that suitable vehicles were available within the community.
- Sandbag distribution was resource intensive and during the recent severe weather the activity had been heavily reliant on manpower from the military.
- Pumps and airbrick covers would also be required.
- Each community had different issues which required different resources.
- The responsibility for the management of stores was unclear.
- The proper identification of strategic flood prevention store locations could minimise equipment deployment time and the people required to build flood defences.

The Commission concluded the discussion by agreeing the benefits of promoting the Repair and Renewal Grant to enhance accessibility to PLP. This would also help to educated communities of the benefits of PLP. Educating the public might be achieved through the use of appropriate trained technicians or specialists.

Councillor Bedwell thanked Kay Lacey, Brian Connerton and Mark Richardson for their feedback and contribution to the review.

Councillor Bedwell advised that the draft recommendations would be considered by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Commission ahead of their publication on 23rd September. Members were invited to submit their recommendations in advance. The final report would be discussed and agreed on 30th September 2014. Carolyn Richardson also welcomed comments from the Commission on the Flood Debrief Report which would be updated to reflect the points raised during the course of the review.

(The meeting commenced at 1.30 pm and closed at 5.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature